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Message Text

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S E C R E T STATE 297881

NODIS
CHEROKEE, FOR DR. BRZEZINSKI ONLY

FOLLOWING REPEAT BEIRUT 6236 SENT ACTION DAMASCUS INFO SECSTATE
12 DEC 77

QUOTE S E C R E T BEIRUT 6236

NODIS

CHEROKEE

CFOR SECDEL

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (VANCE, CYRUS R.)
SUBJECT: SECRETARY'S TALK WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS

1. FOLLOWING IS UNCLEARED REPORT OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN SECRETARY AND PRESIDENT SARKIS MORNING DECEMBER 13 FOR SUCH DISTRIBUTION AS SECDEL WISHES.

2. AFTER EXCHANGE OF PLEASANTRIES, PRESIDENT SAID HE HOPED
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THAT SECRETARY WAS FINDING HIS TRIP SUCCESSFUL. SECRETARY SAID IT HAD BEEN VERY USEFUL TO DATE. HE THEN GAVE PRESIDENT A LETTER FROM PRESIDENT CARTER. AFTER PRESIDENT HAD READ LETTER AND THANKED HIM, SECRETARY SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO SAY A FEW WORDS ABOUT PURPOSE OF HIS TRIP AND WHAT HAD OCCURRED SO FAR.

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3. PRESIDENT CARTER AND HE HAD THOUGHT IT WAS IMPORTANT AT THIS MOMENTOUS JUNCTURE FOR HIM TO COME TO AREA TO MEET WITH LEADERS THERE TO EMPHASIZE OUR DESIRE FOR COMPREHENSIVE SETTLE-MENT OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI PROBLEM AND MAKE CLEAR THAT WE WERE NOT SEEKING A PARTIAL SETTLEMENT. HE HAD MADE THIS CLEAR TO BOTH BEGIN AND SADAT AND BOTH HAD AGREED WITH U.S. POSITION. BOTH WANTED A FULL SETTLEMENT; NEITHER WANTED A PARTIAL SETTLEMENT. BOTH HAD REAFFIRMED THIS POSITION PUBLICLY AND SAID THEY WOULD CONTINUE TO DO SO.

4. SADAT, HOWEVER, HAD SAID IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT THERE BE AN ISRAELI RESPONSE TO HIS ACTIONS IN GOING TO JERUSALEM. IN DOING SO HE HAD TRIED TO MEET ISRAELI REQUIREMENTS EXPRESSED OVER THE LAST 29 YEARS FOR EVIDENCE OF ARAB PEACEFUL INTENTIONS. THIS HAD INVOLVED GREAT POLITICAL RISK FOR HIM PERSONALLY BUT HE HAD THOUGHT THE STAKES JUSTIFIED IT. THE RESPONSE FROM THE ISRAELIS NEEDED TO TAKE THE FORM OF (1) A STATED READINESS TO WITHDRAW FROM OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND (2) A STATED WILLINGNESS TO SOLVE THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM.

5. THE SECRETARY HAD TRANSMITTED SADAT'S POSITION TO BEGIN, WHO SAID HE UNDERSTOOD IT AND UNDERSTOOD THE NEED FOR RESPONSE. HE HAD ASKED THE SECRETARY TO CONVEY SADAT'S POSITION ALSO TO HIS FOUR SENIOR MINISTERS, WHICH SECRETARY HAD DONE. THEY, TOO, HAD INDICATED THEY UNDERSTOOD SADAT'S

POSITION AND THEY WERE IN THE PROCESS OF FORMULATING THROUGH DEBATE A RESPONSE TO HIM. IN STRICT CONFIDENCE HE COULD TELL SARKIS THAT BEGIN HAD ASKED HIM TO ASK PRESIDENT CARTER TO RECEIVE HIM ON DECEMBER 16 IN WASHINGTON TO DISCUSS SITUATION AND ISRAELI RESPONSE TO SADAT. THE PRESIDENT HAD AGREED AND BEGIN WAS LEAVING FOLLOWING DAY FOR NEW YORK WHERE HE WOULD STAY FOR ONE DAY OF REST. THE SECRETARY AND BEGIN WOULD MEET WITH THE PRESIDENT ON FRIDAY MORNING.

6. THE SECRETARY BELIEVED THAT BEGIN'S GOING TO TALK TO PRESIDENT CARTER INDICATED SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH HE REGARDED NEED FOR ADEQUATE RESPONSE TO SADAT.

7. SECRETARY SAID HE THOUGHT IT MIGHT ALSO BE USEFUL TO GIVE A LITTLE BACKGROUND OF THE SITUATION AS HE SAW IT. FIRST OF ALL, THE ATMOSPHERE IN JERUSALEM WAS TOTALLY DIFFERENT FROM WHAT IT HAD BEEN
THE SADAT VISIT HAD EFFECTED A SEA CHANGE.
THE MAN IN THE STREET WAS NOW SAYING THE SITUATION COULD NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN. THEY COULD NO LONGER SAY THE ARABS DID NOT WANT PEACE. THEY REALIZED THEY

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MUST RETHINK ATTITUDES TOWARD PROBLEMS THAT THEY
HAD NOT WANTED TO FACE.

8. IN EGYPT, SADAT HAD TOLD HIM HE HAD THE SUPPORT OF
THE VAST MAJORITY OF PEOPLE INCLUDING THE ARMY. THIS
WAS CONFIRMED BY WHAT OTHERS HAD TOLD US. GENERAL GAMASY
FOR INSTANCE, TOLD ISRAELI REPORTERS WHO ASKED ABOUT
ARMY SUPPORT THAT HE WOULD TAKE THEM TO ANY MILITARY CAMP
AND LET THEM TALK TO THE SOLDIERS THEMSELVES.

9. RETURNING TO ISRAEL, SECRETARY SAID THAT WHEN
HE SAT DOWN AND STARTED TO TALK TO BEGIN AND THE CABINET
HE FOUND AN IMMEDIATE WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS SUBSTANTIVE
ISSUES. NO ATTEMPT WAS MADE, AS IN THE PAST, TO BRUSH
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THEM ASIDE. THE ISRAELIS WERE TRYING TO FIND WAYS TO
OVERCOME OBSTACLES TO PEACE RATHER THAN USING THEM AS
MEANS TO AVOID DISCUSSION.

10. THE SECRETARY REALIZED THAT IN SPITE OF THESE
POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS THERE WAS THE NEGATIVE FACT THAT
ARABS WERE SPLIT. HE HAD HAD A GOOD TALK WITH
HUSSEIN ON THE SUBJECT. LATTER SAW HIS ROLE AS ONE OF
TRYING TO RESTORE HARMONY AMONG THE ARABS. HE FELT IT WAS
A SACRED CAUSE. JORDANIANS WOULD NOT ATTEND
CAIRO BUT WOULD ATTEND GENEVA AND BELIEVED THERE WAS
A REAL POSSIBILITY GENEVA WOULD BE HELD. SO DID WE.
SO DID SADAT AND BEGIN. THIS MEANT A GENEVA AT
WHICH THERE WOULD BE COMPREHENSIVE AND FINAL SETTLEMENT.

11. THE SECRETARY WAS GOING TO SEE ASSAD LATER SAME DAY.
HE HOPED LATTER WOULD KEEP DOOR OPEN TO GENEVA.
HE PLANNED TO TELL ASSAD HIS ASSUMPTION U.S. BEHIND A
PLOT TO SET UP CAIRO CONFERENCE LEADING TO SEPARATE
PEACE AGREEMENT WAS UNFOUNDED. WE HAD NOT BEEN CONSULTED
ABOUT SADAT'S INITIATIVE, BUT SUPPORTED IT BECAUSE
WE BELIEVE IT WAS A CONSTRUCTIVE STEP TOWARDS PEACE.
WE WERE CONCERNED THAT IF THIS OPPORTUNITY FOR PRO-
GRESS WAS NOT SEIZED IT WOULD BE LOST FOREVER.

12. SARKIS SAID HE WAS PLEASED AT THE POSITIVE DEVELOP-
MENTS SECRETARY HAD DESCRIBED. HE HIMSELF WAS CONVINCED
THAT THE ISRAELI AMIENCE WOULD CHANGE AS A RESULT OF
SADAT VISIT. HE HOPED THAT ISRAEL WOULD NOT LET
THIS OPPORTUNITY PASS WITHOUT MAKING A MEANINGFUL COUNTEROFFER
TO EGYPT AND TO ALL THE ARABS. WE WERE NOW FACE TO FACE
WITH FULFILLMENT OF THE AMERICAN PROPOSITION THAT
TERRITORY BE GIVEN UP IN EXCHANGE FOR RECOGNITION, AT
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LEAST AS FAR AS EGYPT WAS CONCERNED. SADAT HAD
RECOGNIZED ISRAEL IN A SPECTACULAR FASHION. NOW IT WAS
UP TO ISRAEL TO RESPOND. THE PRESIDENT CONTINUED THAT
LEBANON'S INTERESTS WERE IN A GENERAL PEACE WHICH WOULD
INCLUDE ALL ARAB STATES AND
WHICH WOULD DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM OF THE PALESTINIANS.
PEACE WOULD BE WITHOUT EFFECT FOR LEBANON IF IT DID
NOT PROVIDE FOR A PALESTINIAN HOMELAND. A SETTLEMENT
BASED ON WITHDRAWAL FROM THE SINAI ALONE LEAVING
500 TO 600 THOUSAND PALESTINIANS IN LEBANON WOULD BE
OF NO HELP TO LEBANON. LEBANON HAD TWO OBJECTIVES: TO
SECURE ITS FRONTIERS AND TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE
PRESENCE OF THE PALESTINIANS.

13. PRESIDENT SAID THAT WITH REGARD TO THE SOUTH HE
DID NOT KNOW WHETHER THE SECRETARY HAD ANY NEW INFORMA-
TION, BUT THERE WAS NOTHING WHICH LED HIM TO BELIEVE
THAT THE SITUATION WOULD IMPROVE.

14. SECRETARY SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO ASK A QUESTION
ABOUT LEBANESE POSITION REGARDING GENEVA. WHY
DID LEBANON INSIST ON COMING IN DURING LATTER PART OF
CONFERENCE? WE THOUGHT EVERYBODY SHOULD BE THERE FROM
THE BEGINNING. SARKIS SAID LEBANESE WERE MOST
INTERESTED IN TWO ASPECTS OF GENEVA, PEACE WITH
ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE, WHICH WAS A HEAVY
BURDEN FOR LEBANON. THEY HAD AN INTERNATIONALLY
RECOGNIZED FRONTIER WITH ISRAEL AND DID NOT WANT TO GET
INVOLVED IN NEGOTIATIONS OVER THAT.

15. SECRETARY SAID WE EXPECTED TWO QUESTIONS OF NATURE OF
PEACE AND PALESTINIAN PROBLEM WOULD BE DISCUSSED FROM THE OUT-
SET. THERE PROBABLY WOULD BE WORKING GROUPS DISCUSSING THESE
PROBLEMS IN PARALLEL WITH OTHERS. LEBANESE SHOULD BE THERE
ON THE GROUND OR THEY WERE GOING TO LOSE AN OPPORTUNITY TO
DEFEND THEIR POSITION AND THEIR INTERESTS.

16. THE PRESIDENT SAID NO ONE HAD A GREATER INTEREST
THAN LEBANESE IN PEACE AND THEY WOULD GO TO GENEVA AS
SOON AS THEY COULD. THERE WERE POLITICAL RESTRAINTS
THAT HAD TO BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION, HOWEVER.

17. SECRETARY SAID HE WOULD APPRECIATE HEARING THE PRESIDENT'S

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THOUGHTS ON ASSAD'S CURRENT VIEWS AND THE POINTS HE THOUGHT
WERE IMPORTANT TO HIM AND WHICH SHOULD BE DISCUSSED.

18. THE PRESIDENT SAID HE DID NOT THINK THIS WAS THE
TIME TO PRESS ASSAD REGARDING GENEVA, MUCH LESS CAIRO.
HE FELT THAT WITH TIME THERE WAS CHANCE ASSAD WOULD GO TO
GENEVA. HE ALSO THOUGHT IT IMPORTANT THAT SECRETARY
TRY TO CONVINCE HIM WE WERE NOT BEHIND SADAT'S INITIATIVES.

19. AT THIS POINT PRIMIN HOSS, FONMIN BOUTROS, UNDER-
SECRETARY HABIB AND ASST. SECY SAUNDERS ENTERED
ROOM AND DISCUSSION GROUP WAS ENLARGED. (SEPTEL).
PARKER

NOTE: UPGRADED TO NODIS CHEROKEE PER SECTO 12109

UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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